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# **HISTORIAN**

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**OF HANCOCK COUNTY**

**Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi**

**February 2008**

## **COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE**

The February luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, February 21, 2008, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Louis Kyriakoudes, Professor of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, who will speak on cigarette advertising in the early 20th Century. Reservations may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, February 20, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people. The price of the lunch is \$7.00.

## **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

It's time to send in your membership dues for 2008. If you are unsure about whether your fees are due, the date on your address label is the expiration date. Prices are fifteen dollars (\$15) for an individual and twenty-five (\$25) for a household. Thanks to all who have already mailed their dues.

We are in need of volunteers of all kinds: typists, carpenters, yard workers, gardeners, etc. Please call 467-4090 to volunteer. *Thank you to those members who have already given of their time and talents.*



Dilville School Students, 1920

*(The students in this picture are identified on page 7.)*

## **INDIAN SCHOOL**

By  
Russell Guerin

Recently, the historical society was offered several old books and documents that were being discarded from the courthouse. Most had little historical value, but one stood out as a reminder that Hancock County still counted many native Americans in its population in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The article is a thin ledger-type book marked "Attendance Records—Indian School." It covers only a few years, 1882—1886, but interesting information can be gleaned from it. At the outset, it is evident that not all Choctaws were relocated during the period of Indian removal of the 1830's and 1840's. Some chiefs were actually awarded land under the treaties while other, less fortunate tribesmen chose not to leave and hid out in places like Bayou La Croix swamp.



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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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In the period covered by the attendance book, it is evident from the 1880 census that groupings of Choctaws resided in some locations. Under Gainesville, for example, two pages are devoted to a section titled "Indian population," listing approximately eighty people in eighteen households. Another half page listed those in Pearlington.

Unfortunately, the ledger does not identify the locations where classes were held. While records were kept for three schools, only one clearly is shown as the Indian School.

On average, the Indian school had fewer than thirty students with girls outnumbering boys two to one. Both groups seemed to have excellent attendance. In some months no absences are evident. Age range was from five to eighteen. Last names are predominately Favre, Taylor, and Yarby. From the census reports, it is clear that the latter also appears as Yarber and Zorba.

For each of the five years, the teacher was Maryann Zengarling. It is known that her family resided at least in part near Bayou La Croix, and the family burials are in evidence in the cemetery of that area. There is also a marker commemorating all the Choctaws buried there.

One oddity is that the Zengarling family does not appear in the census for the period studied.

Perhaps the most remarkable observation is that each school year consisted of only three months, and those were not always the same.

Although the ledger is identified as the attendance record for the Indian school, two other schools are included, but with different names. They are the Fayard and Lott schools, which also were for three-month periods. Both of these were taught by a Mrs. C. V. Johnston.

It is not certain that the Fayard and Lott schools were for the Choctaw children. However, because of the similarity of scheduling and the fact that their attendance records are in the same ledger as the first described school, it may be assumed that they were. Names that show prominently are Fayard, Carver, Fournier, and Lott.

The accompanying photo shows children in a Bayou La Croix class of 1920, almost forty years after the above-described schools. One may note a few similarities, however. One is the mix of ages in the group, and another is the presence of several children who may be assumed to be at least part Choctaw.

The history of Hancock County's Indian population is at best sketchy. Any information which would add to our knowledge of this important part of our heritage would be welcomed.

**Main Street United  
Methodist Church**By  
Scott Bagley

This is the second in a series of articles dealing with historic churches of Hancock County. This month we will



take a look at Main Street United Methodist Church in Bay St. Louis, another church in the county having a long and colorful history.

Shieldsboro, as Bay St. Louis was previously known, was known as a "preaching place" as early as 1842. This "preaching place" (a term used by early Methodist circuit riders to designate the sites of their sermons) gained greater permanence in 1852 when Mr. E. D. Pitts, a local preacher and school teacher, organized what is now the Main Street United Methodist Church. Worship services were held in a building at the corner of Main and Second Street on property given by John B. Toulme. Early records show that the church in 1859 was known as St. John's Methodist Church, rather than by its present name.

By 1871, Bay St. Louis was one of the four most prominent "preaching places" on the Mississippi Gulf Coast along with Biloxi, Handsboro, and Pass Christian. Official church records reflect that in 1879 the Reverend J. W. McLaurin was appointed the first pastor. The first documented member was Mrs. Eliza Bernard. In 1881, the church was listed on the Handsboro circuit and the Reverend J. C. Calloway was pastor. Bay St. Louis at the time had a population of about two thousand, and its Methodist Church had sixteen members.

The final twenty years of the nineteenth century turned out to be a banner year for the church. In 1887, Benjamin Jones, the pastor at the time, reported a four-week revival at Bay St. Louis. During the revival, forty-six new members

were received into the church. A year later, the church raised fifty-two dollars to organize a county society for the distribution of Bibles in the area. In 1890, Reverend L. Wallace replaced Henry C. Brown as pastor and wrote at the time of his fine reception by the church under the leadership of the Honorable E. J. Bowers, Dr. R. L. Turner, J. C. Grimes, M. L. Ansley, W. F. Hall and L. H. Hearin.

In 1892, the first parsonage was built on property south of the original building on the corner of Second and Court Streets on property given by John V. Toulme, son of John B. Toulme. The first pastor to occupy the new parsonage was the Reverend W. G. Forsythe.

In 1895, during the pastorate of the Reverend Nolan B. Harman, construction began on the present church building at the corner of Main and Second Streets, the original building being moved next door. While the church building was not finished until around 1900, the unfinished church was dedicated by Bishop Charles B. Galloway in 1897. During the church's construction members worshiped in the incomplete building which, for a period of time, had no windows or doors. The congregation, however, was more fortunate than most along the coast. Pass Christian, Gulfport, Waveland, and Mississippi City had no Methodist Church at the time. Records reflect that in 1900 the new church building was wired for electricity at a cost of thirty-six dollars. The church building is considered an outstanding example of carpenter gothic archi-



Originally the upper part of this building sat at the corner of Main and Second Streets and was used by the Methodist Church for services prior to the building of the present church in 1900. Afterwards, it was moved next door, the building was turned parallel to Main Street and raised, and the bottom floor was added as commercial space.





Main Street United Methodist Church at 162 Main Street  
The original exterior design of the building has remained virtually unchanged since its completion in 1900.

ture.

By 1902, membership stood at two hundred members. Records reflect that the pastor at this time, W. W. Cammach, received an annual salary of \$365 for his services. For the next ten or so years, membership numbers fluctuated, and by 1915 membership had shrunk to 149. This same year a significant tragedy struck the church when on April 8 George Alexander Guice, the pastor at the time, was struck and killed by a Louisville and Nashville passenger engine while traveling to his Sunday night service.

Membership continued to fluctuate over the next few years, and in 1923 an additional piece of land was donated to the church by the Bay Hotel Company. By 1925 membership stood at 127, and the salary for the pastor, J. G. Gallo-way, was twelve hundred dollars.

In 1936 under the pastorate of J. Early Gray, a six-classroom annex was built to adjoin the church. This building was later converted into a fellowship hall when more facilities were obtained.

The 1940's brought more expansion of church property thanks to the generosity of A. C. Exnicious, a prominent church member at the time. In 1944, Mr. Exnicious gave to the church a plot of land adjoining the church building. Five years later the church purchased from Mr. Exnicious a two-story building adjacent to the land given earlier. It is interesting to note that the front portion of the second floor of this building was the original place of worship for the Methodists referenced earlier in this article. The Exniciouses eventually forgave the last one

thousand dollar note of purchase. With these additions the church grounds covered nearly all of a small city block in the downtown area next to the Hancock County Courthouse. The decade peaked in membership in 1944 at 384 but dropped to 288 by 1950. By this time the pastor's salary had increased to three thousand dollars.

The 1950's also proved to be a good decade. The old educational building was renovated and

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*Mississippi's No-Man's Land*

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enlarged to contain a pastor's study, kitchen, dining room, fellowship hall, and two dressing rooms. With new facilities and an increase in city population, church membership by 1960 stood at 422. During this new decade came the building of a new parsonage during the pastorate of A. Lamar Martin. The parsonage, a twenty-six thousand dollar project, was built on the corner of Second and Timberlane Streets. The lot was purchased from church member C. C. McDonald, Sr. The parsonage was dedicated and occupied in March of 1964, and the old parsonage was converted into an educational building housing the children's division of the Sunday School.

Unfortunately the end of this decade brought Hurricane Camille. While the church suffered minimal damage in this 1969

storm, not a single family in the church was left unaffected. The church lost a number of members because of people moving out of the area. The Reverend Bernard Walton, the pastor at the time, reportedly did an outstanding job of holding the demoralized congregation together.

The next decade brought many important developments including the razing of the old parsonage behind the church and the old educational building making way for the construction of the new educational building in 1973 – a building that would house the entire church school. The new building was dedicated in September of 1977 during the pastorate of Gilbert Oliver. This same year brought the church's celebration of its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

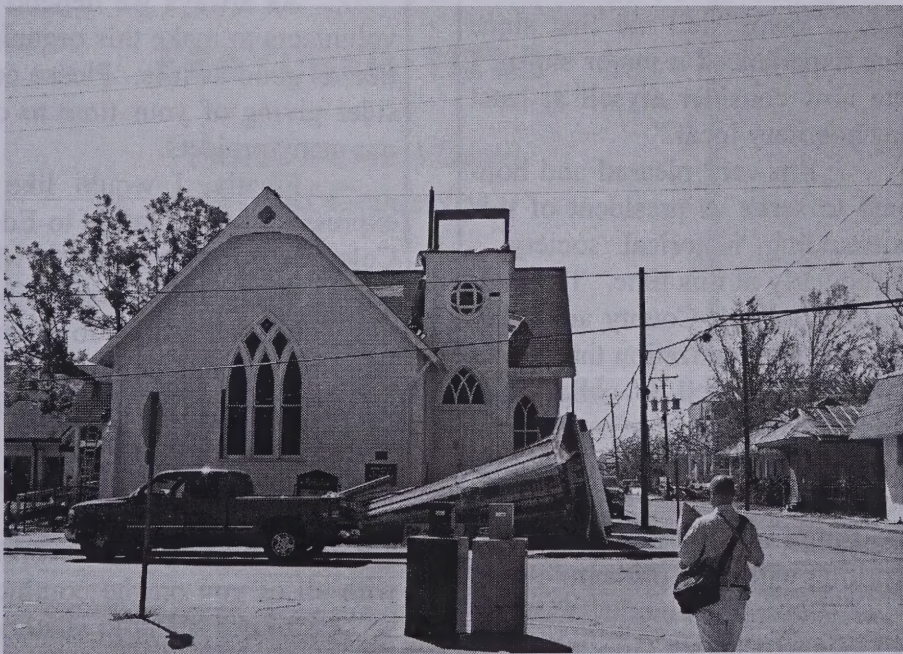
The 1980's began with the

opening of the Methodist Day Care Center on September 1, 1980, with 126 students and Wendy Rupp as its first director. This center was a much needed service for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, summer camp, and after-school programs. In 1982, five memorial windows were installed and dedicated in the sanctuary, and in June 1983 a new office/pastor's study was built between the fellowship hall and the educational building. The Reverend Curtis Moffat was the first pastor to occupy the new office space.

In 1987, the church purchased the block south of the educational building across Court Street for its parking lot. Final paving and landscaping of the parking lot occurred in 1991.

The last decade of the twentieth century brought even more changes to this historic church. On February 18, 1993, a new multi-purpose hall with full kitchen facilities was dedicated and named in honor of Rebecca Baxter Seal. Soon thereafter additional space was added in phases between the pastor's office and the sanctuary. This additional construction also encompassed some remodeling of the church's office area and space for a library. Finally, the sanctuary was completed renovated in 1999. On June 25, 2000, the Main Street United Methodist Church library was designated a Christian Resource Center. The purpose of this center is to provide materials for study, spiritual growth and inspiration for its church family.

As with other Hancock



Damage to the church steeple caused by Hurricane Katrina  
Currently plans are to restore/reconstruct the steeple and return the entire outer church façade to pre-Katrina condition.



County church history articles, this one concludes with Hurricane Katrina. The storm, which struck on August 29, 2005, took aim at Bay St. Louis, but thankfully, the Methodist Church on Main Street suffered *comparatively* little damage. Three to four inches of water in all the buildings except the sanctuary required significant floor repair, but most of the church documents were spared. The sanctuary's steeple was blown off and remained a familiar post-storm landmark as it lay in front of the church for many weeks before it was moved and stored on additional church property off of Second Street. Some of the stained glass windows were also broken. Developing plans under the current pastorate of Rick Brooks call for the replacement of the church steeple and some reinforcement of the sanctuary structure. The stained glass windows have been restored.

On a final note, any history

of this church would not be complete without a mention of the sign that sits in front of the church in the heart of Bay St. Louis. This fairly typical church sign has for many years had not only the name of the church, worship times, and the name of its current pastor but also a regularly changing piece of wisdom quoted thereon. This sign and its "food for thought" survived the storm and, along with the toppled but still recognizable steeple, provided church members and many residents of the area a level of comfort during very uncertain times.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

As I mentioned at our January luncheon, it's likely that many Society members had never heard of its new president. I'm fairly new to Bay St. Louis (having retired here in 2003) but many "locals" tell me that since I've experienced a major storm, I can now consider myself at least an "honorary local."

I'm very pleased and honored to serve as president of this outstanding historical society – particularly at this time. The people of Hancock County are lucky to have an organization that works so hard and well to collect and preserve the history of our special county. We have an energetic board of directors excited about the future and I look forward to working with each of them.

Enormous credit of course belongs to Charles Gray, our Executive Director, for his interest and boundless enthusiasm. His

efforts since the storm are particularly noteworthy as he helped (and continues to help) many residents by supplying critical information for, among other things, Mississippi historical home grants.

This is indeed an exciting time for the Historical Society as we continue to move forward in the digital age with an ever expanding state of the art website. Our move in this direction has been greatly facilitated by our new webmaster, Marianne Pluim. Make a point of visiting our new website noted elsewhere in this newsletter. You will be quite impressed.

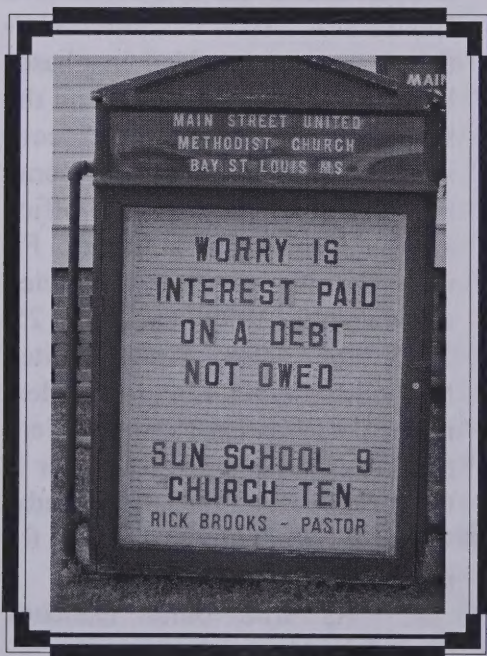
Our renovation/reorganization of the Loblano House continues with rebinding and indexing of our many resources. Further building work will occur as funds become available.

As always we depend on volunteers to make this organization as good as it is. Please consider giving of your time to one of our many projects.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Eddie Coleman, our administrator, who, among many other responsibilities, does such a fine job of writing for, editing, and publishing our always timely and interesting newsletter. Speaking of the newsletter, if you'd like to write an article, talk to Eddie.

I look forward to working with all of you on the continued success of our splendid Historical Society.

Scott Bagley





# IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS IN THE DILVILLE SCHOOL PICTURE

The students in the picture have been identified as follows: L to R (sitting)— Albert "Boy" Lusich, Eldon Moran, Jorday Johnson, Verdie Johnson, Lillian Lusich, and Sarah Favre;

L to R (mid-standing)— Legier Lusich, Velma Zengarling, Herbert Zengarling, Claiborne Ladner, Rufus Lusich, and Corine Lusich;

L to R (back-standing)— Luvinia Moran, Robert Zengarling, Clara Ladner, George Zengarling, and Arnevia Moran.

This information was provided to the Hancock County Historical Society by Luther Ladner.



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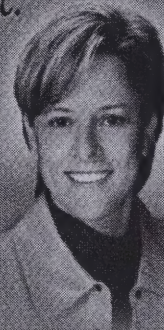
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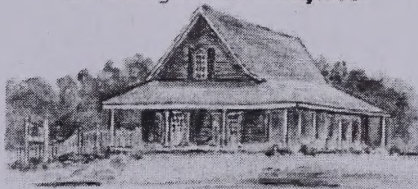
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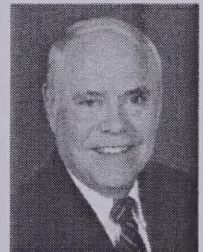
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